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SUBJECT: RISING DANISH CONCERN ABOT GAZA VIOLENCE

¶1. (SBU) The Danish government and leading politicians continue to balance their assessment of the conflict in Gaza between assigning clear blame to Hamas and signaling growing

concerns about the civilian casualties inflicted by the Israeli retaliation. Following a January 6 meeting with the parliamentary foreign policy committee, Danish FM Moller declared that there is widespread consensus among Danish parties to condemn Hamas for provoking hostilities but at the same time condemn the "exaggerated" use of military force by Israel. There are differences in focus among the parties, of course, with some on the center-right (especially the hawkish Danish Peoples' Party) taking a tougher line in support of Israel and others in the center-left opposition much more critical, but the recent expansion of Israel's offensive has begun to shift opinion here across the board in favor of an immediate cease-fire.

¶2. (SBU) FM Moller also announced that he will call in the Israeli ambassador to register Denmark's displeasure at the destruction by Israeli forces in Gaza of three mobile clinics provided by a Danish humanitarian organization. A number of Danish aid organizations have urged the government to press within the EU for a prompt Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

¶3. (SBU) Although Danish police have not been able to tie the incident conclusively to the situation in Gaza, a December 31 attack on two Israeli merchants in a Danish shopping mall has heightened fears of violent actions and protests by Denmark's sizable and sometimes volatile Palestinian population. Public demonstrations before the Israeli and Egyptian embassies have so far been largely peaceful, but Danish authorities remain on alert.
CAIN